

# Living in a Segregated Neighborhood Linked to Higher Blood Pressure Among Blacks

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Residing in more integrated communities appears to promote heart health among African Americans, according to recent findings published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* that showed that moving from segregated neighborhoods to more diverse communities was associated with a significant drop in blood pressure (a well-known predictor of heart attacks and strokes), [NPR reports](#).

For the study, researchers at Northwestern University reviewed the health records of 2,280 Black adults between ages 18 and 30 during a 25-year period that started in 1985. These individuals lived in highly segregated neighborhoods in Chicago; Minneapolis; Birmingham, Alabama; and Oakland, California, when the study began.

Interestingly, scientists noted that those who relocated from highly segregated areas to settle in more integrated communities enjoyed significantly lower blood pressure compared with those who stayed put. Specifically, the systolic blood pressure (the first, or top, of the two numbers used to measure it) of these individuals was one to five points lower than readings at the start of the study, researchers reported. (While these numbers may seem small, this could mean thousands fewer heart attacks and strokes among a large group of people.)

“There’s a decent-size body of evidence relating stress to blood pressure, and that’s one pathway that we hypothesize that segregation influences health—through exposure to violence, things like that—that could increase your stress level and then potentially influence blood pressure,” said Kiarri Kershaw, PhD, MPH, an assistant professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University and lead author of the study.

Researchers also suggested that less segregated neighborhoods might offer more economic opportunities for adults, access to better schools for children and increased opportunities to live healthier lifestyles because of improved access to resources such as parks, sidewalks, gyms, pharmacies and grocery stores with more fresh produce.

Other experts agreed that the findings confirm that we must address segregation to enhance health outcomes for minorities in America.

[Click here](#) to learn more about how where you live can seriously affect your health.

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